

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 124

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRUSSELS 1467

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XT, BE

SUBJECT: FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE BELGIAN NATIONAL
ELECTIOS

REF: BRUSSELS A-41

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1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT AN ISSUE IN THE BELGIAN

ELECTIONS BUT THE EMBASSY SEES REASON FOR CONCERN ABOUT THE LONGER-TERM IMPACT OF A SHIFT OF POWER TO A NEW GENERATION OF PARTY LEADERS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO MUST INSPIRE THE ACTIONS NEEDED TO MAINTAIN, STRENGTHEN OR REVITALIZE EXISTING POLICIES. THIS GENERATION WILL TEND TO CONSIDER ACTIONS AND POLICIES FROM MORE THEORETICAL AND REGIONALLY-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVES. CONTINUED INTENSIVE EFFORT WITH BELGIAN LEADERS WILL BE NEEDED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE US AND BELGIAN PERCEPTIONS OF COMMON INTERESTS REMAIN CONVERGENT. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN AFFAIRS IMPLICATIONS OF BELGIAN ELECTIONS. THE BASIC LINES OF BELGIAN FOREIGN POLICY ARE NOT UNDER DEBATE IN THE ELECTIONS OF MARCH 10. NEVERTHELESS, THE ABILITY OF BELGIUM TO FULFILL ITS DEFENSE OBLIGATIONS COULD BE AFFECTED BY DETENTE-ORIENTED DEFENSE REFORMS INCREASINGLY ADVOCATED BY SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AND LIBERALS AS WELL AS SOCIALISTS. MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, THE DEPARTURE FROM PARLIAMENT OF AT LEAST 50 MEMBERS, COMING ON TOP OF THAT OF 60 MEMBERS IN THE NOVEMBER 1971 ELECTION, WILL REMOVE FROM POLITICAL LIFE MOST OF THE GENERATION-- SCHOOLED IN THE EXPERIENCE OF DEPRESSION AND THE FAILURE OF NEUTRALISM -- THAT HAS LED BELGIUM SINCE 1945. IN THEIR PLACES (MORE SO IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAN THE SENATE, WHERE THE MINIMUM AGE IS 45) WILL BE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHOSE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INCLINATIONS ARE ROOTED MORE IN THEORY OR IN REGIONALISTIC SUB-NATIONALISMS THAN WERE THOSE OF THE MEMBERS THEY REPLACED.

3. SOCIALIST "RADICALIZATION". SO FAR, THE RADICALIZATION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY PROGRAM HAS BEEN CONFINED TO ITS DOMESTIC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS. WORKED OUT IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE SOCIALIST GENERAL FEDERATION OF LABOR (FCTB), THE PROGRAM REFLECTS POSITIONS ADOPTED BY THE FGTB CONGRESS IN 1972 (BRUSSELS 1774, MAY 1972), WHICH WERE TOUTED BY FGTB GENERAL SECRETARY GEORGES DEBUNNE AS INTENDED TO PREVENT THE INTEGRATION OF BELGIAN SOCIALIST ORGANIZATIONS INTO THE "NEO-CAPITALIST SYSTEM OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES" AND AS A STEP TOWARD A GENUINE SOCIALIST SOCIETY. THE CURRENT SOCIALIST PARTY PROGRAM ALSO ASKS FOR LIBERAL ABORTION LAWS AND "PLURALISTIC" SCHOOLS COMPRISING CONFESSIONAL AND NONA/CONFESSIONAL SECTIONS. THIS PROGRAM WAS HAILED BY THE YOUNG SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION OF BRUSSELS AREA AS A "WELCOME
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"TURN" (VIRAGE) TO THE LEFT, SIGNIFYING A CHANGE TOWARD "REVOLUTIONARY REFORM".

4. THESE POINTS, TOGETHER WITH THE SOCIALIST CALL FOR MORE GOVERNMENT CONTROL IN THE ENERGY AND BANKING SECTORS AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S "RIGHT" TO INVEST DIRECTLY IN ANY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR HARDLY CONSTITUTE "REVOLUTIONARY REFORM" AS THAT TERM MIGHT BE UNDERSTOOD OUTSIDE WESTERN EUROPE. SOME SOCIALISTS' VIEWS MAY

CHANGE AFTER MARCH 10 ABOUT THE POLITICAL EFFICACY OF EVEN THIS MUCH "RADICAL" TALKS, IF THE PSB LOSES GROUND. NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME, HOWEVER, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE RADICAL CONTINGENT IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY WILL STICK TO ITS MORE DOCTRINAIRE LINE. ITS MEMBERS CAN BE EXPECTED TO PRESS FOR REVIEW OF BELGIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND FOR PUTTING TEETH IN THE USUAL PIOUS STATEMENTS SUPPORTING AN EVENTUALLY DEMILITARIZED AND ALLIANCE-FREE EUROPE, AS EXPRESSED BY THE PARTY WHEN THE SOCIALIST-LED GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED IN JANUARY 1973 (SEE BRUSSELS A-052 OF FEBRUARY 22, 1973).

5. THE CHRISTIAN LEFT. THE BELGIAN SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY CONTENTS WITH ITS OWN PACIFIST AND LEFT-WING GROUPS OF YOUTH AND WORKERS WHO CHALLENGE THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND THE ECONOMIC POLICIES FOR WHICH THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY HAS STOOD. THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF THESE GROUPS WAS EVIDENT IN THE WELATH OF ANTI-NATO PROPOSITIONS SUBMITTED TO THE SPECIAL CONGRESS ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HELD BY THE FLEMISH SOCIAL CHRISTIANS IN OCTOBER 1973, AND TO THE ACCEPTANCE BY THE CONGRESS OF DISARMAMENT AND DISSOLUTION OF MILITARY PACTS AS LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES OF THE PARTY (SEE BRUSSELS A-289 OF NOVEMBER 9, 1973). SEVERAL PROMINENT SOCIAL SHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED TO US THEIR CONCERN ABOUT THIS TENDENCY IN THEIR PARTY AND ABOUT THE CAPACITY OF THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO CONTAIN IT (BRUSSELS 5317).

6. AMONG FRANCOPHONE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS THIS SAME PACIFIST TENDENCY IS CONCENTRATED IN THE CHRISTIAN WORKERS MOVEMENT (MOC), SOME ELEMENTS OF WHICH RECENTLY JOINED WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO PRESENT COMMON LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENT AND FOR PROVINCIAL COUNCILS UNDER THE NAME OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND PROGRESSIVE UNION (UDP) (BRUSSELS A-44 OF FEBRUARY 22, 1974). OTHER SOCIAL CHRISTIANS, INCLUDING STAFF OFFICERS OF THE CONFEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS, HAVE JOINED A CONTINGENT FROM THE FGTB AND

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7. THE LINGUISTIC PARTIES. THE MILITANT LINGUISTIC PARTIES, THE FLEMISH VOLKSUNIE (VU) AND THE FRANCOPHONE DEMOCRATIC FRONT (FDF) AND WALLONIAN RALLY (RW), WILL EVENTUALLY COME TO PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN DETERMINING THE DIRECTION OF BELGIUM'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS, AS THEY GAIN STRENGTH IN PARLIAMENT VIS-A-VIS THE THREE TRADITIONAL PARTIES. THE LINGUISTIC PARTIES ARE COMPOSED OF PHILOSOPHICALLY DISPARATE ELEMENTS FROM ALL
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THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES AND MUST AVOID CLEAR DEFINITIONS OF THEIR POSITIONS ON MAJOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN COHERENCY. BUT IF INTERNAL PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES DISAPPEAR, THE PRIMARY DEVOTION OF THESE PARTIES' MEMBERS TO SUB-NATIONAL INTERESTS WOULD BE A POOR FOUNDATION UPON WHICH TO EXPECT THEM TO BUILD A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO EXTERNAL RELATIONS.

8. NEGLECT AND SUBORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. ACCORDING TO ONE SCHOOL OF CONVENTIONAL WISDOM, PREOCCUPATION OF BELGIAN POLITICIANS WITH INTERNAL LINGUISTIC ISSUES HAS THE SALUTARY EFFECT OF LEAVING BELGIUM'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS SAFELY IN THE HANDS OF PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMATS. THE LONG, SAD PRE-WAR HISTORY OF BELGIUM BEFORE THE FORMATION, AFTER 1945, OF A VAST CONSENSUS IN SUPPORT OF AN INTEGRATED EUROPEAN DEFENSE AND ECONOMY, BELIES SUCH WISDOM. WITH POSTWAR CONSENSUS NOW BEING CHALLENGED ON THE LEFT, AND POLITICAL CAREERS BEING FASHIONED INCREAS-

INGLY AROUND EMERGENT SUB-NATIONALISMS, MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES TEND TO NEGLECT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. TO THE EXTENT THEY DO BECOME INVOLVED IN THEM, IT IS SOEMTIMES WITH A NARROW, REGIONALISTIS ADVANTAGE IN VIEW. TYPICAL OF SUCH ACTIVITY, WHICH HAS IMPINGED DIRECTLY UPON THE CONDUCT OF BELGIUM'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS, WERE THE TRAVELS OF CABINET MEMBERS IN THE LATE GOVERNMENT -- PRIME MINISTER LEBURTON "PRIVATELY" TO MALTA, YUGOSLAVIA, AND IRAN AND TO ZAIRE, THE LAST WITHOUT A WORD TO THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER; LIBERAL STATE SECRETARIES DEFRAIGNE AND KEMPINAIRE TO KUWAIT AND TO AFRICA RESPECTIVELY; FRANCOPHONE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN MINISTER GRAFE TO FRANCE. IN ALL THESE CASES, THE TRAVELERS WERE IN PURSUIT OF ADVANTAGES FOR THEIR POLITICAL OR REGIONAL CONSTITUENCIES AND, OF COURSE, THEMSELVES.

9. PERSONALITY DIFFICULTIES AND LACK F COORDINATION WERE INEVITABLE IN EARLY 1973 IN A SWOLLEN 36-MEMBER CABINET, MANY OF THE MEMBERS WHICH WERE NEW TO THEIR JOBS (INCLUDING THE FOREIGN MINISTER). THESE PROBLEMS WERE COMPOUNDED, HOWEVER, BY THE DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, EXTERNAL COMMERCE, AND FOREIGN AID AMONG DIFFERENT MINISTERS FROM DIFFERENT PARTIES, AND BY THE EXISTENCE OF SEPARATE SECRETARIATS FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN ADDITION TO THE MINISTRY FOR ECONOMICS. THIS UNWILDLY DISPERSAL OF RESPONSIBILITIES WAS
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DICTATED BY REQUIREMENTS FOR LINGUISTIC, REGIONAL, AND RELATIVE POLITICAL BALANCE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET. THE SUB-RODINATION OF MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WAS MADE STILL MORE EVIDENT WHEN, IN THE SHRUNKEN CABINET OF OCTOBER 1973, RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN AID WAS ASSIGNED TO THE SOCIALIST MINISTER FOR BRUSSELS AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL COMMERCE T THE LIBERAL MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (BRUSSELS 6051, 6061). ALSO, THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS EXCLUDED FROM A SMALLER, INNER CABINET CREATED TO PROVIDE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF COORDINATION OF STATE AFFAIRS.

10. AFTER THE ELECTIONS? THE EMBASSY FORESEES NO DIFFICULTIES IN MAINTAINING THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION OF THE CARETAKER GOVERNMENT, OR THE SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT THAT EVENTUALLY EMERGES, FOR COMPLETION OF THE NATO AND EC DECLARATIONS THAT WE WANT. GIVING VITALITY TO THE PRINCIPLES THEY SET FORTH WILL BE A PROBLEM IN THE LONGER TERM, IF DETENTE PROGRESSES. HELPING AND, IF NEED BE, INFLUENCING BELGIUM TO CONTINUE TO TAKE THE CONCRETE STEPS THAT TRANSFORM ABSTRACT PRINCIPLES INTO SUBSTANCE WILL REMAIN THE CHIEF TASK OF THIS EMBASSY FOR THE YEARS TO COME. BELGIUM'S POLITICAL LEADERS, AND THROUGH THEM THE BELGIAN POPULANCE, WILL NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED TO ASSESS BELGIUM'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FRM A BROADER PERSPECTIVE THAN THE IDEOLOGICAL AND REGIONALISTIC ONES THAT MANY OF THEIR YOUNGER ELEMENTS NOW AVOW. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE THROUGH

BROAD AND CONTINUAL CONTACT WITHMANY BELGIANS.
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